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Claims 1-21 are present in the above-captioned application and have been subjected to restriction under 35 U.S.C. § 121. Specifically, the Official Action avers that the following inventions are present in the claims:

Group I, Claims 1-20, drawn to an endoscopic treatment device, classified in class 606, subclass 144; and

Group 21, drawn to a suturing method using an endoscopic suturing device, classified in class 606, subclass 223.

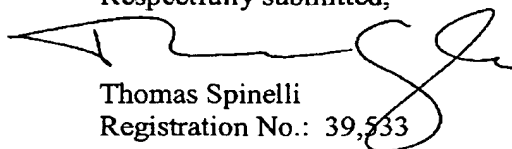
It is the Examiner's position that the inventions listed as Groups I and II are distinct from each other.

Furthermore, the Official Action avers that Group I contains claims directed to 37 patentably distinct species. It is also the Examiner's position that the species listed as Species 1-37 are patentably distinct from each other.

In response to the Examiner's requirements for restriction and species election, Applicants have canceled claims 1-16 and elect to prosecute the subject matter of Group I, and Species 21, which is readable on claim 17. Applicants have also added new claims 22-24 which are also readable on elected species 21. Applicants reserve the right under 35 U.S.C. § 121 to file one or more divisional applications directed to the non-elected subject matter in this application.

In view of the foregoing, an examination on the merits of the elected claims, at an early date, is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,



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